**Transcript**

***Dr Patricia McNamara – The respite care project***

I’m representing La Trobe University as the academic partner to seven of the major child and family welfare agencies in Victoria and we’re investigating respite foster care. We’ve been leading that project by the Good Shepherd Youth and family Services who initiated this project four years ago. Respite care is usually offered as I say as foster care to families who perhaps are not in a position to provide care for a certain period of time or where they’ve perhaps been under stress and need a break from caring. So, our hypothesis is that respite care can help to preserve families and support child wellbeing and our concern is that whilst we know that respite foster care can do these things it’s not readily available.

Well, as I say we feel that respite care based on international evidence and also on several scoping studies we’ve done here in Victoria can help to preserve families and support child wellbeing, but it is inadequately funded as things stand. So we are really hoping that our research will raise the profile of respite care in Victoria and perhaps lead to some programmatic funding which will mean that respite care is more readily available to the community, especially to foster carers. We know that foster carers are under enormous stress caring for children who’ve had early attachment disruption and who really are quite vulnerable and sometimes quite difficult to care for and these carers really have told us that they really do need these breaks but they, and also general members of the community just don’t seem to have access to adequate respite.

Well I guess our project is informed by the well known ethos that it takes a village to raise a child. That’s an African dictum that’s become quite popular. People like Hilary Clinton seem to use that quite frequently and we feel that in the Australian community it’s been demonstrated that people are quite generous really. They’re keen to help vulnerable people raise their children but there isn’t adequate funding really to support that goodwill in the Australian community as it stands. And we really hope that our project will help to turn things around in that regard.